ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A framer is adapted for framing a high error rate data signal received through a link of a communications network, the data signal comprising M (an integer, M>1) interleaved sub-streams. The framer includes means for detecting a respective unique synchronizing word within each sub-stream. Each respective unique synchronizing word comprises: a non-unique position word having a first predetermined hamming distance; and a non-unique identifier word having a second predetermined hamming distance. The framer preferably includes M individual framers, and a master framer. Each individual framer operates to search the data signal to detect a respective one of the respective unique synchronizing words; and assert a respective individual frame found state for a first predetermined period of time when a respective one of the unique synchronizing words is found. The master framer controls operations of each individual framer, and declares a master frame lock state if the individual frame found state is asserted by all of the individual framers within a second predetermined period of time.